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736 Gravel Edition/The Pentagon Papers/Vol. II

(H) It hoped bloodshed can be avoided or reduced to absolute minimum.
(I) It hoped that during process and after, developments conducted in such manner as to retain and increase the necessary relations between VNese and Americans which will allow for progress of country and successful prosecution of the war.

[Document 129]

Reprinted from New York Times

C.I.A. Station Chief's Cable on Coup Prospects in Saigon

Cablegram from Mr. Richardson to Mr. McCone, Aug. 28, 1963.

Situation here has reached point of no return. Saigon is armed camp. Current indications are that Ngo family have dug in for last ditch battle. It is our considered estimate that General officers cannot retreat now. Conein's meeting with Gen. Khiem (Saigon 0346) reveals that overwhelming majority of general officers, excepting Dinh and Cao, are united, have conducted prior planning, realize that they must proceed quickly, and understand that they have no alternative but to go forward. Unless the generals are neutralized before being able to launch their operation, we believe they will act and that they have good chance to win. If General Dinh primarily and Tung secondly cannot be neutralized at outset, there may be widespread fighting in Saigon and serious loss of life.

We recognize the crucial stakes are involved and have no doubt that the generals do also. Situation has changed drastically since 21 August. If the Ngo family wins now, they and Vietnam will stagger on to final defeat at the hands of their own people and the VC. Should a generals' revolt occur and be put down, GVN will sharply reduce American presence in SVN. Even if they did not do so, it seems clear that American public opinion and Congress, as well as world opinion, would force withdrawal or reduction of American support for VN under the Ngo administration.

Bloodshed can be avoided if the Ngo family would step down before the coming armed action. . . . It is obviously preferable that the generals conduct this effort without apparent American assistance. Otherwise, for a long time in the future, they will be vulnerable to charges of being American puppets, which they are not in any sense. Nevertheless, we all understand that the effort must succeed and that whatever needs to be done on our part must be done. If this attempt by the generals does not take place or if it fails, we believe it no exaggeration to say that VN runs serious risk of being lost over the course of time.

[Document 130]

August 29, 1963

STATE 272

STATE TO LODGE AND HARKINS

1. Highest level meeting noon today reviewed your 375 and reaffirmed basic course. Specific decisions follow:
2. In response to your recommendation, General Harkins is hereby authorized

to repeat to such Generals as by CAS officers. He should state the Nhus from the gov standings with the Generals, sources available to them at coup which has good chance U.S. armed forces. Harkins with the coup planners and coup planning.

3. Question of last approach message from Secretary to
4. On movement of U.S. for or leak at present and beliments should be closely controlled of course prevent unanticipated event knock down any report
5. You are hereby authorized at a time and use of this authority, you announcement so as to minimize danger to government. We also assure you think it essential, and creating process of cooperation own view is that it will be done with coup, and not by yours.

[Document 131]

STATE 279

STATE TO LODGE

Deeply appreciate your understanding enormous stakes and Harkins will be carried possible from our end to

Purpose of this message separate Diem and the Nhus as a single package that if the Nhus were removed. My own personal Nhus are by all odds the internationally and for the Nhus could be removed abandoning his post. In any distinction can or Madame Nhu.

The only point on whether an attempt should